

82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division  
loading at 29 Palms  
Marine Corps Air  
Station.

# COOPERATIVE ENGAGEMENT

By CHARLES R. LARSON

## Summary

The Asia-Pacific region claims attention on geographic and historical grounds, but American interests are intensifying because of complex economic, political, and security challenges. Part of the region's importance derives from its sheer strategic dimensions: covering 52 percent of the earth's surface and encompassing a wide diversity of peoples, cultures, and religions, and hence disputes. Another factor is the phenomenal economic growth of some Pacific economies, leading to the rapid modernization of regional military forces. Under the strategic concept of *cooperative engagement*, the Pacific Command applies military assets, funds, and programs, to achieve three objectives: forward presence, strong alliances, and crisis response. Because of the vastness of Asia and the Pacific and Indian Oceans, the Armed Forces play a significant role through *adaptive forward presence* in sustaining the U.S. military commitment to regional stability.



F-16 at Misawa Air  
Base, Japan, during  
Cobra Gold '93.

U.S. Air Force (April Alexander)

By virtue of geography and history, the United States is a Pacific power with enduring economic, political, and security interests in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region. For the United States, the Pacific and Indian Oceans constitute major commercial and strategic arteries—vital parts of America's lifeline to markets and resources overseas. Our national interests and stake in this dynamic region are substantial and growing. As Winston Lord, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs,

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observed, "Today, no region in the world is more important for the United States than Asia and the Pacific. Tomorrow, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, no region will be as important." The Nation must remain engaged in the region to support and promote its interests.

Amidst the current transformation of the international order, it is helpful to remember that American interests in Asia have been markedly consistent over the last two centuries. They include access for trade, freedom of navigation, and preventing the rise of hegemonic powers or coalitions.

Economic, political, and security engagement by this Nation in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region since the end of

World War II has been a dominant factor in its emergence as one of the engines of global growth and a major market for our exports. The forward deployment of the U.S. forces in the region contributes significantly to maintaining stability, enhances our diplomatic influence, and promotes an environment conducive to the growth of our economic interests there. In President Clinton's words, our military presence forms "the bedrock of America's security role" in the Asia-Pacific region.

We must seize the opportunity offered in this new era to shape a better world—one built on shared ideas, interests, and responsibilities. Our priorities for Asia-Pacific security are clear. As laid out by President Clinton in Seoul, they are: first, a continued American military presence in this region; second, stronger efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; third, new regional security dialogues; and last, support for democracy and democratic values, and by supporting regional security and stability through our forward military presence. With continued engagement, we can advance vital U.S. interests, while shaping a prosperous and secure future.

National power ultimately rests on the strength of the economy. As we seek to reinvigorate our economy and rekindle prosperity, we will look to Asia which still leads the world in economic growth. Already more than 36 percent of our international two-way trade is with the Asia-Pacific region. We trade more with this region than with any other in the world, including the European Community and our North and South American neighbors. Approximately 30 percent of our \$448 billion in exports in 1992 were with this area. Today, 800 U.S. firms have business connections in Singapore alone. Furthermore, approximately 2.5 million American jobs are directly dependent on export markets in Asia and the Pacific.

As economic issues move to the forefront and the pace of international trade quickens, our economy and our future are becoming intertwined with other nations in this region. There are increasing opportunities for U.S. prosperity through trade and investment and, despite the challenges of the region, we hope to maintain the regional stability essential for that trade to flourish.

#### Regional Challenge

As a theater of operations the Asia-Pacific region poses a number of major challenges for the United States. Its tremendous size—from Arctic waters and frozen tundra to tropical isles, the region comprises about 105 million square miles or 52 percent of the earth's surface—creates some critical time and distance problems. We often refer to this challenge as the tyranny of distance. It takes about three weeks for a Navy battle group or Marine amphibious ready group to cross the region. A jet transport carrying troops to a crisis needs more than a day. A fighter plane may have to refuel more than a dozen times just to get to a trouble spot. If North Koreans invaded the South today, as they are poised to do on a few hours notice, it would take about 21 days for forces to get there from the U.S. mainland with large numbers of ground reinforcements and heavy equipment. More immediate help would have to come from forward forces in Japan, Alaska, and Hawaii.

Another major challenge of the region is diversity: *among* nations as well as *within* them. Diversity of history, culture, and reli-

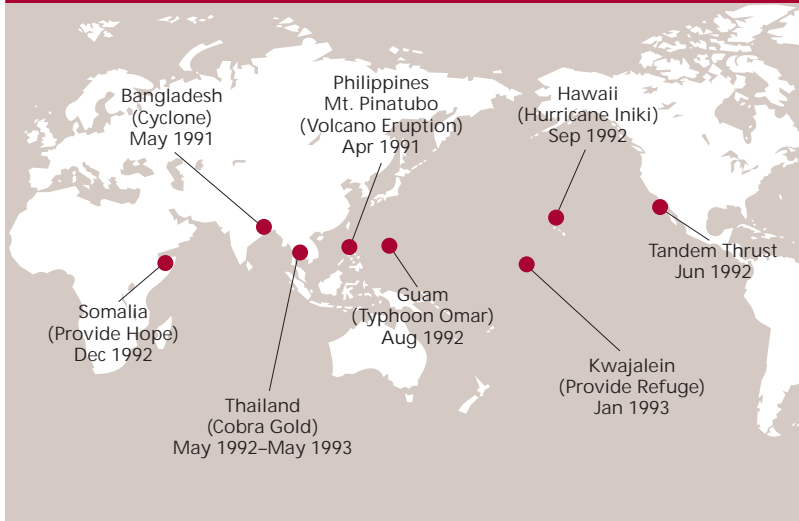


Exercise Tiger Balm '89.

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## Adaptive Presence in Action



it takes about three weeks for a Navy battle group or Marine amphibious ready group to cross the region

gion, as well as territorial and boundary disputes and historic animosities, color the perspectives of regional leaders.

The third major challenge is change: political change, as the peoples of the region demand more open and democratic forms of government; economic change, as growing Asian economies continue to outstrip the rest of the world; and military change, as modern weapons proliferate and nations seek to adjust their security arrangements with the demise of the old bipolar world. Today, the most rapidly modernizing armed forces in the world are found in the Asia-Pacific region.

## Strategic Framework

To meet the challenges and address the issues confronted in this theater, our strategy must be consistent with the three pillars of foreign policy outlined by the President and articulated by the Secretary of State. These include making our economic security a primary goal of foreign policy, basing policy on a military structure that meets new and continuing threats to our security interests and international peace, and promoting democratic principles and institutions worldwide.

Our strategy must also address the threats of both today and tomorrow. Recently Secretary of Defense Aspin identified four dangers in the world:

- ▼ the rising tide of regional, ethnic, or religious conflicts

- ▼ the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

- ▼ the possible failure of democratic reform (especially in Russia)

- ▼ the pursuit of security interests in ways that do not protect economic interests.

## Cooperative Engagement Strategy

In synthesizing the proposed elements of the strategic framework I developed a strategy for the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) which I call *cooperative engagement*. This is a process of aggressively employing means available to PACOM—namely, military assets, funds, programs, and forces—to realize three strategic goals: forward presence, strong alliances, and crisis response. This process aims to achieve engagement and participation in peace, deterrence, and cooperation in crisis, and unilateral or multilateral victory in time of conflict.

Cooperative engagement not only advances security, but as a by-product promotes stability, political and economic progress, democratic ideals, and American values through bilateral relations with more than forty nations.

Under cooperative engagement PACOM forces are organized on three tiers: forward deployed, forward based, and CONUS-based. At the core of forward deployed forces is a modest number of forward-stationed forces in Japan and Korea (with stationing costs largely underwritten by our allies), along with maritime forces continuously afloat in the Western Pacific. We deploy additional forces on a rotational basis, such as Marines to the Indian Ocean or Air Force units to Singapore. And we temporarily deploy forces forward for exercises or projects. This provides all the benefits of forward presence—engagement, deterrence, influence, and rapid reaction—together with the flexibility to adjust rapidly.

We can tailor forces for specific challenges by pulling them from forward American bases (viz., Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam), units afloat in the Eastern Pacific, or PACOM forces based in the continental United States. We can even draw on the forces of other CINCs. I call this process of rapidly tailoring forces to a specific mission *adaptive forward presence*.



Sea Knight helicopters  
aboard *USS Tripoli*  
during Operation  
Restore Hope.

Joint Combat Camera Center (Jeff Brady)

#### Adaptive Force Presence Key

Because of the region's size, savings in time, distance, and the cost of deploying forces forward are enormous. This presence underscores the vitality of existing alliances: it promotes new friendships as host nations observe the benefits of training with the U.S. Armed Forces in an atmosphere of trust and confidence; it encourages and helps sustain a stable geopolitical climate in which to promote economic growth; it assists not only nation-building efforts but the advancement of democracy by illustrating the apolitical role of the American military; and it increases the readiness of both U.S. and friendly nations. Most importantly, forward presence demonstrates the continued American commitment to remain an Asia-Pacific power on a daily basis.

Quite simply, a continued credible military presence is the cornerstone of our successful strategy for regional peace and prosperity. Our modest forward presence provides the opportunity to reap the economic benefits of Asian dynamism through trade and investment, and allows us to avoid the enormous financial costs of conflict that instability would almost certainly generate.

Furthermore, we rely on forward presence and the international cooperation it engenders to build coalitions for collective action in time of crisis. As we draw down our forces in a more competitive world, it is imperative to do so wisely, with our national interests in mind, in order to continually play a positive role in the region during peacetime, crisis, or conflict.

#### Cooperative Engagement in Peacetime

In peacetime our goal is to achieve engagement and participation. PACOM endeavors to do this by engaging virtually every nation of the region in military-to-military relations. Their active participation is sought through forward deployed forces as well as a variety of military programs.

PACOM sponsors joint and combined exercises which emphasize everything from tropical medicine and basic seamanship to amphibious operations and computer-simulated war games. This offers a chance to reinforce treaty relationships with Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, France, and Thailand by increasing interoperability with allies and opening channels to friendly countries. For example, last year we conducted successful naval exercises with both India and Russia for the first time.

In addition, we run one of the most effective education exchange programs in the world. More than 4,000 foreign military personnel trained with us during 1992. Participation in seminars and conferences is growing: 24 nations joined us for a logistics seminar in Sri Lanka recently, and 29 attended a disaster relief conference in Honolulu. One Security Assistance Program which has proven especially beneficial is the International Military and Education Training (IMET) Program. In FY92, 718 foreign students, civilian as well as military, received training under IMET.

At the same time PACOM promotes a range of contacts with senior leaders, not



Commanders confer-  
ring at Korat, Thailand,  
during Cobra Gold '93.



U.S. Air Force (Raymond T. Conway)



U.S. Air Force (Mickey Foster)

An American and a  
Thai soldier on a field  
exercise.

just from traditional allies (such as Japan, Australia, and the Republic of Korea), but from those nations with which we are developing relationships (such as Russia and Mongolia). The Russian initiative has been so successful that it is being expanded to include junior officers to foster future cooperation among the next generation of military leaders in the region.

PACOM provides a positive influence in the theater in many other ways. Our ships make hundreds of port visits each year, from a carrier battle group visit to Australia to a salvage ship to Micronesia. We also assist developing countries with humanitarian aid under cooperative Title 10 programs. And we currently have five 13-person civic action teams composed of Army, Navy, and Air Force personnel providing continuous assistance to South Pacific nations.

The end product of our peacetime effort to reach other countries is a network of bilateral military relations that span the Pacific, a framework for stability which promotes our own interests and encourages economic prosperity, political progress, and stability across the region.

#### Cooperative Engagement in Crises

We work to deter aggression and encourage cooperation with friends and allies in times of crisis. Our strategy is to build on the solid military relationships that we develop and the tough, realistic joint training that we coordinate in peacetime. We want to be able to react promptly and decisively—and to build a coalition if necessary. In the past two years we have developed a joint task force (JTF) concept at PACOM to respond to any contingency with the appropriate force.

Under this new concept an existing single-service unit is designated a JTF in time of crisis and its commander reports directly to CINCPAC. Multiple service components provide forces and logistical support tailored to

meet a specific challenge at hand. A small deployable contingent from the CINCPAC staff also augments the task force to provide joint expertise.

We have practiced this concept in exercises and employed it in crises. It may take many forms as when a massive storm both killed 139,000 people in Bangladesh in 1991 and rocked a democratic government just 39 days old. On short notice we activated a Marine Corps general and his staff from Okinawa, assigned an Air Force Special Operations colonel as deputy, and provided forces from all services to include Army helicopters from Hawaii and more than 7,000 sailors and Marines from the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet. No intermediate headquarters was allowed to intrude between the JTF commander and CINCPAC headquarters. We used this same streamlined approach to tailor forces when Mount Pinatubo erupted in the Philippines. A JTF was activated with an Air Force general in command, an Army general as deputy, and Navy and Marine Corps forces from as far away as Japan to evacuate 18,000 Americans some 6,000 miles in eight days from a standing start. Most recently we used the JTF concept during Typhoon Omar on Guam, Hurricane Iniki on the island of Kauai in Hawaii, and during Provide Refuge (the rescue and repatriation of more than 500 Chinese nationals) at Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands. Training forces for flexibility and adapting their employment to the mission with a chain of command that reports directly to the CINC also works in support of continuing missions such as POW/MIA accountability and counterdrug operations.

Of course our goal in any crisis is to prevent the situation from deteriorating into conflict, not only by deterring aggression by the use of force, but by cooperating with friends and allies. We expect others to share the responsibility for maintaining the peace, but history reveals that coalitions coalesce around winners, and cooperative engagement enables PACOM to provide quick, decisive responses that let friend and foe alike know that we mean business.

#### Cooperative Engagement in Conflict

Finally, if conflict cannot be avoided, we are ready to fight and win—through a multi-lateral operation if possible, or with unilateral force if necessary. Here the JTF concept

forward presence demonstrates the continued American commitment to remain an Asia-Pacific power on a daily basis

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Infantrymen conducting battle drills during Tandem Thrust '93.

U.S. Army (Kevin Thomas)



Working on H-46 Nightrider during Tandem Thrust '93.

2<sup>d</sup> Combat Camera Squadron (Val Gempis)

Observing the *enemy* during exercises on Tinian Island, Guam.

2<sup>d</sup> Combat Camera Squadron (Val Gempis)

is again employed and, more importantly, will work. Last year we practiced it with a force of 22,000 deployed in and around Southern California, in an operation that duplicated every aspect of regional conflict, from Special Forces deployments, airborne drops, Marine amphibious assaults, and submarine and carrier operations to multiservice air strikes. All services had forces under the 3<sup>d</sup> Fleet Commander who worked directly for me. It was a remarkable exercise in terms of flexibility with Army operators in combat information centers afloat and Air Force planners scheduling carrier strikes. We have successfully tested the concept again, this time in an international context, during Exercise Cobra Gold '93 in Thailand with the I Corps commander serving as my JTF commander.

Exercises such as these demonstrate that we are not just recasting our Cold War strategy or realigning our Cold War force structure. Fundamentally, we have a new force and a new vision.

As I look to the future I see Pacific economic prosperity, regional stability, and political progress, all vital to U.S. national interests, depending on cooperation and engagement with others—and all continuing to rest on the reality of American power. In cooperative engagement we have a sound military strategy to achieve national objectives in peacetime, crisis, or conflict.

The Pacific is important to our future. We must remain actively engaged in the region to promote democratic values and economic growth. And as we restructure our Armed Forces for the post-Cold War environment, we must remember that remaining engaged with an adaptive forward presence is essential to maintaining our national security.

In his first State of the Union address, President Bill Clinton said, "Backed by an effective national defense and a stronger economy, our Nation will be prepared to lead a world challenged as it is everywhere by ethnic conflict, by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, by the global democratic revolution, and by challenges to the health of our global environment." All those challenges certainly exist in the Pacific theater. With American presence and participation, allies are reassured, potential adversaries are warned, and our commitment is assured. With an adequate force and modest forward presence, the United States will remain a leader, partner, and beneficiary of this dynamic region.

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